

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of September 14, 2021**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Julie H. Goodrich, Nathaniel Miller, Charles Morse, and John Stevens. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Utility Superintendent Patrick DeMasi, Eric Davis (All Clean Waste Services), Brian Baker (The Dufresne Group), Neal Goswami, Carolyn Stevens, and Elroy C. Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Participants had the option of attending the meeting either in person or remotely through Go-to-Meeting.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** Those persons present were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The remote contingent also participated as much as possible.

- III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

- IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):**

- a. Eric Davis, All Clean Waste Services: Northfield Recycling Depot/Transfer Station.** Mr. Davis believes the contract All Clean Waste Services has with the municipality to operate this facility will expire soon. Therefore, he wanted to discuss possible upgrades to the facility office such as adding water service and cleaning up the area in general. He believes that such upgrades would justify a longer-term contract. Manager Schulz confirmed the current three-year contract will expire at the end of this month. He noted Mr. Davis and his staff have operated the Recycling Depot/Transfer Station in a very efficient manner and all the public feedback he has received has been positive. Board member Miller asked the reason for the new water service. Mr. Davis said the facility attendants would like the ability to wash their hands after handling certain items. He added that it also would be good to weatherize the office so that the attendants don't freeze in the wintertime. Mr. Davis is willing to work with the Water Department on whatever is needed to install the new waterline. Board member Miller believes these are reasonable requests to ensure proper working conditions for the facility attendants. Board member Stevens also believes these are reasonable requests and should not be too expensive. He noted that adding a waterline probably will necessitate a sewer line as well. Manager Schulz will discuss this with Utility Superintendent Patrick DeMasi. Board member Stevens asked if the waste oil tank was still located at the facility. Mr. Davis said it was even though he has not accepted any used oil since he started operating the facility. He believes the tank is nearly empty. Board member Stevens doesn't want an oil tank located at the Recycling Depot/Transfer Station due to its proximity to the Dog River. Mr. Davis said he will look into the possibility of having the tank drained and removed (if the municipality prefers). Board member Stevens said there are a number of automotive businesses in the area that will accept used oil and he felt having the tank located so close to the river was an unnecessary risk. Board member Goodrich believes Mr. Davis' suggestions are sound and she would support a new longer-term contract with All Clean Waste Services. Board member Morse would like to see all of Mr. Davis' proposals in writing with cost estimates attached. He also feels the ideas are reasonable but would like to see a plan in place. Board member Maxwell thanked Mr. Davis and his employees for their excellent work at the Recycling Depot/Transfer Station. He also would support the facility upgrades once a solid plan has been developed as well as a longer-term contract (five years?) to operate the facility. Manager Schulz said he will meet with Mr. Davis and Superintendent DeMasi in the near future to develop the upgrade plans. He also will draft a new contract for Select Board review as soon as possible.

- b. Brian Baker, The Dufresne Group: South Main Street Stormwater/CSO Project.** Manager Schulz said that the engineering plans for this project have now achieved the ninety percent (90%) completion level. Mr. Baker confirmed this and said these plans have been delivered to the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR). Some feedback already has been received. Mr. Baker said this project currently breaks down into three (3) components that would be put out to bid separately. The first is the "Main Street Stormwater Separation and CSO Abatement Project" and is the main focus of the project. The second component deals with side streets (Elm Street, Prospect Street, and Hill Street) and would divert stormwater into the new infrastructure installed on South Main Street. The third component would address stormwater abatement on Sherman Avenue and Houston Street. Since the first two components would address the elimination of the last remaining CSO (Combined Sewer Overflow) in Northfield, the ANR has suggested combining them into one biddable contract. Although details are not yet available, ANR representatives have made it clear that expanded amounts of federal funds will be made available for such projects to the extent that the municipality would not have to bond for any local share amount. This would make the federal funds almost a grant as the local expenditure would be very low or non-existent. The work on South Main Street would involve replacing the twelve-inch (12") stormwater line in front of the Municipal Building with an eighteen-inch (18") line that would connect with new stormwater lines installed under South Main Street southward to South Street. The collected stormwater would be diverted to the settlement pond located behind the American Legion on Holland Place.

Chair Maxwell asked why the new lines can't be located under the sidewalk on the east side of the street. Mr. Baker said the utility poles located on that side of the street would make this both difficult and expensive. Since the new sidewalks on the west side of the road also cannot be disturbed, the work would be done under the north-bound travel lane. Board member Morse noted the water mains from South Street to the Municipal Building probably date back to 1905 and are due for replacement in a few years. He asked if it were possible to replace the old water mains at the same time as the new stormwater lines are being installed. This would prevent the street from being torn up more than once in just a few years. Mr. Baker said this was possible even though there would have to be a five-foot (5') separation between the new water mains and new stormwater lines. Manager Schulz said he has discussed water main replacement with Superintendent DeMasi and they agree it has to be done in the near future. However, adding this to the proposed stormwater project would require a significant change order that might disrupt the current project timeline. Mr. Baker said there would not just be a delay due to the change in the engineering plans but the state permits required might take several months to prepare and process. Manager Schulz said he could reach out to ANR to see if such a delay would be allowed for this reason. Mr. Baker said the water main replacement would have to be bid out as a separate project even though the work would be done simultaneously. Board member Morse believes Northfield residents would appreciate not having access to such a well-travelled thoroughfare disrupted more than once in coming years. Chair Maxwell noted the Select Board members have discussed this project for some time with some delay resulting from concerns over how this would be funded. In retrospect, it now seems these delays were the best course of action as Northfield now can benefit from an unanticipated influx of federal funds for such projects. Board member Goodrich believes it would be good idea to combine the first two project components into one as the ANR representatives have suggested. Mr. Baker does recommend this as it could make this project eligible for additional state funding. Board member Goodrich thinks the idea of adding water main replacement to this project is a good one provided the timeline delay doesn't threaten the availability of outside funding. Chair Maxwell asked if the Select Board members needed to take action to permit the combination of the two contracts. Mr. Baker said formal action was not needed as this is merely a matter of merging and updating existing paperwork.

Manager Schulz said nothing else can be done for the time being as all we can do now is wait to see how much state and federal funding is available for this project. Mr. Baker said we should find this out in the next couple of months. Manager Schulz said having these nearly complete engineering plans should be sufficient for outside funding eligibility. Chair Maxwell then thanked Mr. Baker and his team for all the work done on this project to date. He looks forward to the next project update.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **August 24, 2021 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Approval of Warrant #05-22.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve Warrant #05-22 in the amount of \$1,764,931.39. It was noted that of the total warrant amount, \$1,175,200 represented property taxes collected by the municipality and then forwarded to the Paine Mountain School District. Another \$215,667 was spent purchasing power for the Northfield Electric Company (NED). Chair Maxwell asked about the Highway Department's purchase of three-inch (3") plant mix. Manager Schulz said this was used on roadsides for drainage projects. This material was not put down on the road itself. Chair Maxwell noted payments for renting a second road grader and asked if the Highway Department's equipment rental line item remained under budget. Manager Schulz said these particular payments were charged to the previous fiscal year and did result in an overage in that line item. The current fiscal year budget for this remains in good shape. Manager Schulz then noted that even though the payment to Josh Fenoff Siteworks for the South Main Street Sidewalk Project is indicated as the "final payment," about \$6,000 in this project's budget was withheld in case any additional work was needed. He has inspected and found a few areas requiring minor work that will be done soon. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through August 22, 2021.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$101,760.83. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- c. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through September 5, 2021.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Stevens, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$98,299.27. Chair Maxwell asked if this included some of the overtime expense related to the Labor Day Weekend Festivities. Manager Schulz said it did. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Development Review Board (DRB) Appointment.** Manager Schulz said a DRB position has been vacant for a couple months due to resignation. Lawrence Garland has submitted a letter of interest for the position. He has previously served on other municipal boards including the Brown Public Library Board of Trustees and seems to be a well-qualified candidate. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Stevens, to appoint Lawrence Garland to the vacancy on the Development Review Board. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**
- b. **American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.** Manager Schulz said he has received additional information regarding the use of these federal funds allocated for Northfield. The current amount is about \$1,900,000 and half of this money has already been received by the municipality. The remainder will be provided sometime next summer. Based on information received from the federal government and the Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT), Manager Schulz has learned (among other things) that the municipality can earn interest on these funds while deliberating on how they should be ultimately dispersed. Manager Schulz and Finance Director Laurie Baroffio have been exploring the best way to invest these funds.

The municipality has until the end of 2024 (12/31/24) to decide how to spend these funds and enter into obligation agreements. The deadline to actually spend all the funds is exactly two (2) years later. Therefore, the municipality has a relative luxury of time to decide what best to do with these funds. Manager Schulz said that since the original rationale for these funds is to assist municipalities recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government is encouraging projects that would address the pandemic's direct impact on the community. This could include payments to individuals and/or businesses that were hardest hit. There also could be payments to essential workers to reimburse them for their extra efforts during the pandemic, etc. The funds also could be used to make up for the loss of municipal revenue due to the pandemic, which in Northfield could include the loss of utility revenue (water, sewer, and electric) due to businesses closing or operating at reduced levels. Infrastructure improvements are especially encouraged by the federal government and this could include extending broadband internet access as well as new and/or extended water and sewer lines. Manager Schulz noted the Northfield Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) will need an upgrade in the next couple of years to meet new state and federal licensing requirements so some of these federal funds could be used for this.

Manager Schulz has learned that these funds cannot be used for roads, bridges, or culverts unless said roads lead to a wastewater treatment facility, etc. The funds can be used to improve municipal facilities. Especially encouraged are building upgrades that would improve employee working conditions, i.e. better heating, cooling, air circulation, etc. The funds also could be used to purchase power generators so municipal facilities could still operate in case of a natural or man-made outages. In addition, funds could be used for local social programs such as group housing but there are several special conditions attached to this. Manager Schulz will receive additional information in coming weeks that he will forward to the Select Board members. Given the timeline provided, the municipality will have the ability to explore various options over the next few months.

Board member Morse would like to see the written documentation related to what kind of fund expenditures are and are not allowed by the federal government. Chair Maxwell said he received an email from the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) that provided clear guidelines on this. He will forward this email to the other Select Board members. Board member Stevens felt deciding how to spend these funds will be an evolving process over several months. Board member Goodrich hopes the municipal department heads and members of the public making suggestions on how to use these funds provide up-to-date cost estimates as well. Chair Maxwell felt this might be a good discussion topic for the next time the Select Board members holds a day-long retreat to discuss various local matters in depth. It also should be determined how the proposed spending would conform to the long-term goals in the recently revised Northfield Town Plan.

- c. **Turkey Hill Farm Lease Agreement.** Manager Schulz said personal inspections of the lease agreement site were conducted in recent weeks and he wanted to share this and other new information with the Select Board members. As this matter relates to contract negotiations, he felt it was best discussed later in the meeting in executive session (as state law permits). There was no objection.

VIII. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- a. **Main Street Bridge Replacement Project.** Manager Schulz said the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) has been progressing on this project and the preliminary engineering plans should be ready for Select Board review by early November. These plans will focus on such construction issues as bridge alignment, etc. VTrans also is starting negotiations regarding the cross-river utility lines paralleling the bridge, the water and sewer lines buried under the riverbed, etc. Core samples will be taken starting next week but this should not disrupt traffic too much in the area. There also will be subsurface readings taken and soil analysis for possible contamination.

The municipality probably will need to start the public conversation early next year regarding how vehicular and pedestrian traffic will be diverted during the three (3) month period when the current bridge is removed and the new one installed.

- b. **Stormwater Project.** Manager Schulz said the Water Department will start a small project tomorrow (09/15/21) installing new stormwater catch basins on Summer Street and Pleasant Street. The work should be completed in a couple weeks and will help divert stormwater away from the WWTF.
- c. **Northfield Police Department (NPD) Staffing.** Manager Schulz said the NPD remains short-staffed due to two (2) full-time officers now deployed in the armed forces reserves. There is another full-time officer vacancy that has been advertised for some time. Manager Schulz noted Hardwick recently dissolved its police force, which might free up its former officers for other positions around the state. He did warn the Select Board members that they might see an increase in NPD overtime in coming months until the positions are filled. NPD Chief John Helfant also has been trying to hire additional part-time officers to fill some of the shifts.
- d. **Delinquent Tax Sale.** At the previous regular meeting (08/24/21), Manager Schulz requested and received authorization for the municipality to bid on a tax sale property on Union Brook Road that has had past issues with excessive outside trash, a failed septic system, etc. It was felt that it was unlikely that someone else would bid on the property given these problems so the municipality might have to take control of the parcel in order to resolve them. However, a private party did bid successfully for the parcel and has already paid the four (4) years of delinquent property taxes owed to the municipality. The owner still has a full year to redeem the property by paying all the back taxes and other expenses.

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Sign Permit Review.** Board member Morse said at its last meeting the Development Review Board authorized Zoning Administrator Mitch Osiecki to review sign permits that had already been issued. He asked why that was happening. Manager Schulz said Mr. Osiecki was working recently with a business owner regarding a new sign permit and that person informed Mr. Osiecki that a number of existing businesses had signage in place that was not in compliance with local zoning regulations. In response, Mr. Osiecki is reviewing the sign permits issued over the past fifteen (15) years to determine if there are any real problems. Board member Morse asked if the intention was to impose penalties on non-compliant businesses. Manager Schulz said there is no intention to penalize anyone but to merely ensure there is a level playing field for all. Board member Morse would like this made clear to any business owner who might become concerned by this. Manager Schulz said he will do the outreach to clarify this.
- b. **Northfield Falls Park.** Board member Morse said Dynamos Soccer reserved the Northfield Falls ballfield last Saturday (09/11/21) for soccer practice. There were over seventy (70) people present but it was discovered that the water to the park had already been shut off so the bathrooms were unusable. Board member Morse thought this was an inexcusable action that should not reoccur. Manager Schulz said he spoke to Superintendent DeMasi about this and told him that the municipal water to the parks cannot be shut off in future without the Town Manager's approval. He also will contact Dynamos Soccer himself to express the municipality's sincere regret over this unfortunate situation.
- c. **Interim Recreation Committee.** Board member Stevens asked whether there has been any progress in forming an interim recreation committee comprised of regular park users. Manager Schulz said he has done the outreach but only one person expressed any interest in this. He will try again and (hopefully) there will be more interest in future.

- d. **Revolving Loan Fund.** Board member Stevens noted that as a result of research and other work performed by former Economic Development Director (EDD) Jon Ignatowski, the Select Board members authorized the establishment of a local revolving loan fund to assist local businesses. He asked about the status of this. Manager Schulz said all the required paperwork has been filed with the State of Vermont and he will discuss with state officials the next steps required to put this into operation. This will be followed by outreach to local businesses to determine which ones might be interested in applying for these funds.
 - e. **Economic Development Subcommittee.** Chair Maxwell said the Economic Development Subcommittee met last week (09/08/21) to discuss (among other things) the vacant EDD position. It was the consensus of the subcommittee members that none of the three (3) applicants had sufficient experience for this position. The members discussed what steps could be taken until a permanent EDD can be hired. These included hiring someone on an interim basis and this included outreach to the former EDD. The members also discussed the possibility of holding an economic summit this fall with local business leaders to discuss their needs, etc.
 - f. **Community Ice Cream Social.** Chair Maxwell noted Norwich University (NU) will be hosting a free Ice Cream Social next Tuesday afternoon (09/21/21) in conjunction with the Northfield Farmers Market, which will relocate to the Crescent for one week. The event is intended to introduce NU President Mark Anarumo to the Northfield community on the eve of his formal inauguration, which was delayed a year due to the pandemic. This will be the beginning of several days of special events on the NU campus through the following weekend related to the presidential inauguration as well as NU Homecoming 2021. The full schedule of the week's activities is available at the website <https://alumni.norwich.edu/homecoming>.
 - g. **NAVI Golf Tournament.** Chair Maxwell said the Northfield Ambulance Volunteers, Inc. (NAVI) will hold an invitational golf tournament on Sunday, September 19, 2021 at the Northfield Country Club. The proceeds will benefit the Betty Podgwaite Scholarship Fund as well as EMS training activities. Registration forms are available at the Northfield Ambulance Bay, the Northfield Country Club, and on the municipal website at www.northfield-vt.gov/public-notices.
 - h. **Union Brook Road Paving Problems.** Board member Stevens asked if the contractor for this paving project will be coming back to fix problems along the road. Manager Schulz said these pavers were planning to come back to Northfield to perform some work on West Hill Road and will address the remaining problems on Union Brook Road at the same time. Chair Maxwell felt it would be a good idea for the Highway Subcommittee to meet soon to discuss this and other matters.
- X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED).** There was none.
- XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Stevens, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss a contract with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:35 p.m.

Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Stevens, to come out of executive session. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board came out of executive session at 9:00 p.m. No action was taken.

XII. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Stevens, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were approved at the Select Board regular meeting of September 28, 2021.